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EYES ONLY

TO: DDA

VIA:

FROM:

SUBJ: *re. Clerical Personnel Overseas*

DD/A P-27
File *R*
DD/A Regis
77-363

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22 JUN 1977

25X1A MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]
Special Assistant to the DDCI
25X1A FROM : [REDACTED]
Chief, Information Services Staff, DO
SUBJECT : Clerical Personnel. (U/AIUO)

25X1A 1. (C) In a recent memorandum prepared at your request, I described the various factors we considered when the COS, [REDACTED] recommended the promotion of [REDACTED] Information Control Assistant. For the sake of simplicity and promptness that memo was limited to a recital of the facts relevant to the specific case, but the institutional problems (we spoke of them on the telephone as well) implicit in that exposition deserve some comment, hence this follow-up memorandum. 25X1A

2. (C) Another case [REDACTED] handled differently by the DDCI, has caused a furor in the Information Services Staff (ISS), and Mr. Knoche has probably heard all he wishes about the matter. There is an aspect of that case which has perhaps been overlooked in the tumult, however. The negative reaction is eloquent testimony to the sterility of our personnel practices as they relate to the development, deployment and advancement of junior-grade employees. In a healthier climate of opinion, the spot promotion of an able employee by the DDCI for outstanding performance would have been applauded, not condemned. The criticism of the spot promotion and our inability to support the [REDACTED] recommendation on Mr. [REDACTED] have their roots in practices of long standing. Some of these practices are not of Agency devising, but external origins do not ensure either wisdom or relevance in personnel policy, which should above all be dynamic. In citing some of the most significant of these practices we will not presume to suggest solutions, but merely to identify some things which merit the concerned attention of Agency management. 25X1A

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3. (U/AIUO) Clerical vs. Professional Status - The dichotomies to be found in a comparison between professional and clerical employees are staggering when assessed in human terms. "Second-class citizenship" is a mild description to attach to our corps of dedicated clerks and secretaries, who have been fixed in grade unless they were fortunate enough to be in a position which provided "head-room". Competitive evaluation was not for these employees - promotion for merit without regard to the grade of the position occupied was available only to the "professional". Yet how many "professionals" were and are highly dependent for their effectiveness on the thoroughly professional support of well-trained, well-motivated personnel familiar with processes, files and procedures which are fundamental to the Agency's mission? The recent exercise in the Directorate of Operations, to review and rank for competitive promotion all GS-07 clericals with more than two years in grade, is a welcome break with the tradition of the past. The need for such a step, and the depth of the problem still to be faced, is graphically illustrated by the fact that the panel reviewing these GS-07's found, in one category of personnel, I am told, 19 out of 23 persons from ISS qualified for promotion. One of these had been in grade since 1957 - twenty years! Personnel who have lived with such constraints cannot be expected to take a broad, generous view when the rules are waived for one of their number. (A different kind of demoralizing situation will arise during the transition period, as personnel who had succeeded in attaining assignment to a non-professional slot with headroom discover that the ground rules they have learned to live with have changed.)

4. (U/AIUO) Position Classification - In a system which depends so completely upon position grade for personnel advancement the role of the position classifier becomes paramount. Those of us who manage large groups of clerical employees often feel in bondage to the Position Management and Compensation Division (PMCD) of the Office of Personnel. When I came into my present position as C/ISS earlier this year, I was struck by the recurrence of references to PMCD - the letters seemed to be on everyone's lips. I learned that PMCD had been surveying ISS positions on and off for almost two years, with no announced conclusions yet available. Employees whose hopes for advancement are tied to position grade may be excused for their mounting impatience with a system which is apparently oblivious to their concerns and needs. ISS is also involved in a dialogue with PMCD on

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another matter, the development of new standards and benchmarks for many of our positions, using the Factor Evaluation System promoted by the Civil Service Commission. Clearly it is to our advantage to have the opportunity to shape these standards to ensure realism and relevance, and we will strive to take full advantage of the opportunity PMCD has provided. We have already registered our dismay, however, as managers of a highly automated, increasingly sophisticated and demanding records storage and retrieval system, because the draft standards write off technology as a mere convenience which does not affect the basic level of mail or file work. The personnel who are expected to qualify themselves through training and experience to handle these new techniques can hardly be enthusiastic about a system which seems dedicated to exploiting them by demanding more and more with no increase in status or emolument. Organizational or government-wide concerns about "grade-creep" have little relevance to people at this level.

5. (U/AIUO) Career Planning and Development -

Clearly related to the foregoing concerns are employee perceptions about the organization's interest in them and their careers - and many have made careers in these clerical positions. (Among our GS-07's in ISS are twenty-five whose longevity computation dates are 1960 or earlier, for example.) Again, grade progression is a fundamental concern, and the development of skills which will permit movement to a slot with headroom is seen by many as the only real way to progress, other than relying on the buddy system with its vicissitudes and pitfalls. But most perceive the Agency's efforts in the area of career development to be feeble and half-hearted at best. In ISS, with one of the largest groups of low-graded personnel in the Agency, we have attempted to do something more dynamic in this area. We make extensive use of vacancy notices, for one thing, and we have developed a detailed guide to career development which provides the interested employee with detailed information about the avenues he may follow to achieve a more satisfying career in the field of records management. Reactions to this effort have been positive, though many problems remain, some of them exacerbated by the clerical/professional dichotomy and the PMCD roles already mentioned. We do not pretend to have found final solutions, but a significant number of persons home-based in ISS believe that we are actively trying to maintain a fair, dynamic program which has, as one of its goals, broader access to opportunity for more people. A heavy emphasis on rotation and on

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training is another aspect of this program, with systematic review of personnel records to try to prevent stagnation.



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